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Father Engagement

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Padres Bien Padres, Very Cool Dads
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Abstract

“Padres Bien Padres, Very Cool Dads”

The *Monterey County Office of Education Head Start & Early Head Start Family & Community Engagement* service has identified the need for father involvement in early childhood education. With a very meaningful purpose “*Padres Bien Padres, Very Cool Dads*”, was started. Four workshops were given to male role models to support parenting engagement with their children. In addition, professional development training was provided to head start *Policy Council* to raise *awareness* of the “Padres Bien Padres, Very Cool Dad’s” program and share different ideas and activities to improve and encourage fathers to participate in head start. The Policy Council members *increased* their *knowledge* about the program and *suggested improvements* for the future of the program and shared *ideas* to *engage fathers*. It is recommended that MCOE Head Start & Early Head Start continues to prioritize *father engagement* for the well being of the children.

Agency and Communities Served

Monterey County Office of Education Head Start & Early Head Start started in summer 1965 with the purpose to address the needs of low-income families with young children. “Monterey County Head Start & Early Head Start, in partnership with the community, is committed to providing the highest quality early childhood education for children 0-5 years and comprehensive child and family services” MCOE Head Start & Early Head Start proudly serves the entire family. The different services provided to families are child development, health, and safety, food and nutrition, mental health, family engagement, and disabilities. Today the program serves over 1,245 children and families (Monterey County Office of Education, 2014).

Family and Community Engagement is a wonderful service Head Start & Early Head Start provides for the families. Specifically, Family & Community Engagement helps the family achieve family goals and helps track them. For example, if a family desires to go camping, head start family service advocates along with family and service engagement supports the family with the essential tools so they can achieve their goal. Another great program Family & Community Engagement oversees is the program governance, “The Monterey County Office of Education, Head Start & Early Head Start and delegate agencies are required by federal law to establish and maintain a formal structure of shared governance through which parents can participate” (Monterey County Office of Education, 2014). The purpose of the shared governance is to give parents the opportunity to participate and engage in policy making and other important decision making for Head Start. Shared governance is achieved through a group

called, Policy Council which meets on a monthly basis to make decisions that affect Head Start in a positive manner for its quality and success. The Head Start & Early Head Start Policy Council membership is comprised of 51% parents of currently enrolled children” (Monterey County Office of Education, 2014). This shows that parental engagement helps shape the agency. The program governance is an essential tool Head Start and Early Head Start families have that helps them build leadership and powerful advocacy skills which is going to lead to their children’s school readiness and overall learning and development.

Problem, issue or need

Currently, there are too few fathers involved in this important formal structure as well as the overall Head Start & Early Head Start community. For example, the policy council consists of twelve members and only two of the participants are males. Another example of low father engagement is in September 2018, Head Start & Early Head Start teachers and Family Service Advocates (FSA’s) at Martin Luther King Jr Head Start had a parent meeting to discuss the importance of parent participation. They had more than forty parents attend, but only seven were male role models. This shows that Head Start & Early Head Start is currently in need of more father involvement in early childhood education.

Contributing factors

It is commonly known that traditional gender roles of early childhood education is seen as women’s work. “Extensive research exists on the importance of parental involvement in children’s education, yet relatively few studies have examined the individual contributions that

mothers and fathers make to their children's schooling. There is a great deal of interest, however, in the role of fathers in children's lives. This interest stems from the fact that until recently fathers were the hidden parent. They were assumed to be the breadwinners of two-parent families, but of limited importance in non-financial aspects of children's well-being and development."(U.S. Department of Education, 1997). Because fathers see this as a mother's role they often assume that everything that has to do with the school should only concern the mother. A study made by the National Center for Education Statistics (1997) showed that " when parents are invited into the schools or centers, fathers are less likely, on average, to respond to these invitations for involvement. Why? Part of the reason is that parents often assume that such invitations are for mothers only". Unfortunately, this is a cycle, fathers get discouraged and are less likely to be involved in their children's early education.

Another common factor of low father involvement is work schedules. Since fathers are viewed as "breadwinners" they spend long hours working and less time at home interacting with their children. Fathers In A Call to Commitment: Fathers' Involvement in Children's Learning (2000) states that " Today's workers are increasingly asked to do more with less, and thus work longer hours. Dual-career families may face scheduling conflicts and have less control over work hours, further aggravating the balancing act of work and family". Ellen Galinsky conducted a study The Ask the Children study questions accepted thinking on such issues as quality time vs. quantity time, how mothers parent their children compared to fathers, how much children really know about the daily lives of parents at work, how much parents like their work, what messages we're sending children about work, and much more, "I can't spend much time with him because

he's working. Sometimes I go with him to work on the weekends. But I just wish that he wouldn't work so much." (Galinsky, 1999). This makes it clear that children have accepted the changes in work and family life today.

One more risk factor that contributes to barriers of low father involvement is education levels. According to *A Call to Commitment: Fathers' Involvement in Children's Learning* (2000), "Some fathers can't read or are functionally illiterate. Or, they can't communicate in English. They are embarrassed to come to school and interact with educators because they lack, or may believe they lack these necessary communication skills". Male parents with little to no formal education may find it intimidating to even communicate with their child's teachers about simple things such as their child's behavior much less their academics. In addition, studies show that parents with a higher level of education are more likely to be involved in their early childhood, "Parents' education is a more significant factor than family income in whether or not they will be involved in their children's education. The less education mom and dad have, the less likely they are to be involved. Not surprisingly, if they are highly involved with their children at home, they are more likely to be involved at school" (Pruett, 2000).

Consequences

Research shows that the number one consequence for low father engagement leads to poor academic achievement of the child, "Children do better academically when their fathers are involved in their schools, whether or not their fathers live with them, or whether or not their mothers are involved. When non-custodial fathers are highly involved with their children's

learning, the children are more likely to get As at all grade levels (NCES, 1997). Paternal academic involvement highly increases the the probability of a child's academic achievement. Research, indicates that children without fathers fail in school three times more often than those in two parent families (Byrne, 1997, pp. 2, 3; Horn, 1997, p. 27; Levine, Murphy, & Wilson, 1997) .

Another consequence to this matter it can lead to future consequences such as behavior problems, hyperactivity, and aggressiveness, “The involvement of a father can decrease the behaviors that may lead to a student suspension from school, “ when a father is closely involved in the young child's life, the child is less likely to exhibit behavior problems, aggressiveness, and hyperactivity” (Reebye, 2015). In contrast if a father is involved a child will learn to problem solve, be curious and children are encouraged to have an open mind, “Research shows that even very young children who have experienced high father involvement show an increase in curiosity and in problem-solving capacity. Fathers' involvement seems to encourage children's exploration of the world around them and confidence in their ability to solve problems “(Pruett, 2000). This indicates that children with little to no father like involvement are more subject to have a to suffer from permanent effect. Overall, this negative habit will prevent students from being successful and have a college career.

Problem model

<u>Causes/ Contributes to:</u>	<u>Problem:</u>	<u>Consequences:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Traditional gender roles ● Educational levels ● Work Schedules 	<p>Too few fathers are involved in childhood education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Poor academic achievement ● Lead to future consequences such as behavior problems, hyperactivity and aggressiveness

Project description, Justification and problem description

Project Title: “Padres Bien Padres, Very Cool Dad’s”

MCOE Head Start & Early Head Start recognizes the value of father engagement in children’s school readiness and overall learning and development. Children benefit from positive, strong, and cooperative relationships with their parents. Therefore, “Padres Bien Padres, Very Cool Dad’s” was developed with the goal of shaping a positive male figure in the life of young children, including creating bonding opportunities. The fatherhood program consisted of four parenting workshops designed to develop, guide and strengthen male skills to bond with the children in their lives. In addition, a professional development was provided to head start Policy Council of the “Padres Bien Padres, Very Cool Dad’s” to create a support system that will benefit the program. The policy council is such an important structure and it has the necessary

tools to support the program. For example, If the program needs extra money a member of the policy council can help us get find the money. It also helps us grow because the selected members are very active in the agency.

Head Start identified that both parenting roles are critically valuable for the development of a child. The father is as important as the mother and Head Start is trying to break the traditional views of the father’s sole responsibility as the “breadwinner”. In “Fatherhood: the Myth of the Second Class Parent,” it states that “There is no doubt that fathers are important contributors to child development. In particular, fathers significantly affect the development of sex roles, cognitive abilities and achievement motivation” (Weinraub,1978). Authors, reviewed studies on father involvement and child well-being published since 1980 found that 82 percent of these studies showed “significant associations between positive father involvement and offspring well-being...”(Head Start Bureau, 2004). Children who have an involved father in their lives in the early years show up for school with more of the qualities needed for learning. Furthermore, this project was carried out shortly after the Dads in Action exhausted its funding and it was determined that there was a need for a similar program to continue supporting fathers so they may best help their child’s well-being (I. Valtierra, personal communication, May 1, 2018) .

Table 1: Scope of work

Activities	Deliverables	Timeline	Estimated completion dates
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Observing Gelacio Provide “Padres Bien Padres, Very Cool Dads”	Revision Ideas	March- May, 2018	September 1,- October 2018
Complete powerpoint	Powerpoint	October 2018	October 2018
Dates approved	Dates and places	October 2018	October 2018
Creating sign in sheets	Dates and places	August 30,2018	September 1,- October 2018
Create questionnaire/ survey	questionnaire/ survey	September 2018	September 2018
Checklist observation	checklist	October 2018	December 2018
Observation at center	Checklist	November 2018	December
Assessment survey	Spreadsheet Survey	November 2018	December 2018

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Some potential challenges, obstacles or unexpected circumstances that may require to make adjustments were a last minute challenge that made was made was that the training with the teachers and FSA's was canceled due to not having a budget to provide this training so arrangements were made to present it to the new members of the policy council since they are an important structure of the agency and it will be beneficial to the program. This was a challenge because most of the Policy Council members were new members and, Head Start staff had to be very sensitive in not overwhelming them with their responsibilities.

Project results

The expected project outcomes of the training for MCOE Head Start and Early Head Start Policy Council are to increase knowledge, share skills, and bring awareness to the value of father engagement create a support system so that the program continues to grow. Finally, another expected outcome is to increase the number of male role models within the head start and the program and the program governance.

The assessment of the training component of the project consists of having the Policy Council fill out a questionnaire (See Appendix A) to evaluate that the information shared was clear. Additionally, the questionnaire gathered suggestions on how to improve the initiation of the program. Lastly, the questionnaire allowed the members to share activities to engage more male role models.

After gathering the data from the questionnaire it was shown that the policy council members increased its knowledge about Padres Bien Padres, all 12 members agreed that the information shared about the program was clear.

Table 2, “ Demonstrates some of the suggestions given by the Policy Council members to improve “Padres Bien Padres, Very Cool Dads”

suggestions to improve “Padres Bien Padres, Very Cool Dads”	
Presenting the program in monthly parent meetings	
The agency to host a father-friendly event such as “male only cookouts”	
Teachers should invite fathers personally to participate	
Total:	3 suggestions

Table:2 suggestions to improve “Padres Bien Padres, Very Cool Dads”

As shown in table 2, members suggested that they would like “Padres Bien Padres, Very Cool Dads” to expand by presenting the program in one of the monthly parent meetings. It was also suggested that Head Starts should host more male events that events to improve the program such as “ male cookouts”. Another one suggested that Head Start teachers should invite fathers personally.

Table 3: “Demonstrates suggested activities by the Policy Council members “Padres Bien Padres, Very Cool Dads”

suggested activities By the Policy Council member “Padres Bien Padres, Very Cool Dads”	
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father-children day	
soccer games	
football games	
going on field trips	
shopping	
Community events	
Build a Support group for fathers	

Table: 3 suggested activities By the Policy Council member “Padres Bien Padres, Very Cool Dads”

As shown on table 3, the activities suggested by the members were to have a father-children day that included playing soccer, football, going on field trips, even going shopping at least once a month. Other activities recommended were to work on creating a safe place for fathers. The most popular activities were to have a father- children day and to build a father support group.

Overall the Policy Council members shared important ways to continue to improve the program. Although mostly all members are new they were very supportive when presenting the information.

The strengths of using a questionnaire to provide feedback about Padres Bien Padres are that the people that completed the questionnaire are invested in HS program improvement. The open ended questionnaire was important to invite any and all ideas as good ideas.

Some limitations of using a questionnaire with open ended questions was that there were going to be fewer responses than a multiple choice questionnaire. The questionnaire did not indicate whether a female or male completed it, this limited the results of finding what suggestions or activities the participating males were interested in.

Conclusion and recommendations for the agency based on results

Based on the results, given suggestion to improve and share activities for father engagement is clearly that The Monterey County Office of Education Head Start & Early Head Start is committed in moving forward with this project.

Future recommendations to the agency are that a training for MCOE Head Start and Early Head Start teachers and Family Service Advocate's gets held to increase knowledge, share skills, and bring awareness to the value of father engagement. Also, that new ideas and strategies are shared that teachers and FSAs can use to encourage fathers to participate in head start. An example of a strategy presented to staff for more fatherhood involvement includes adding more visuals in the classroom showing father involvement. Another example is in case the child is sick they will be encouraged to call the child's male role model instead of just the mother. Also, invite both mother and male role model to the monthly parent meeting. In addition, staff will be trained on how to retain fatherhood involvement in an educational setting. Also to ensure that staff practicing shared strategies with male participants after the training. Finally for the agency to continue to support the "Padres Bien Padres, Very Cool Dad's" to raise a number of male role models within the program. The program needs more support in bringing awareness about its existence.

Personal reflection/final thoughts

Something very important that I learned about this problem is the importance of making it a priority. At times it was very difficult because so many things were happening such as other exciting events, office work, and planning events it was hard to keep focus. Also the importance of being consistent on the work. Throughout the implementation of this project, I was able to learn and grow as a professional and most important network. Focusing on the problem or issue needed to address was a bit challenging because I had to work with mostly males and I had never done this before. In addition, the implementation was very exciting because it was something new so we had to explore different types of curriculums to find the right one for our agency, find a name and find a pilot site which meant I helped recruit. Working along with the fathers was an experience I learned so much from them not only workwise but it also helped me grow in my personal life. The agency was always very supportive and inclusive. Because I would always take initiative on projects I was always invited to participate in big events and take lead in some activities. My mentor was always very professional, she demonstrated a great attitude toward this project which was a great support. Something I learned from Isabel was to always work with a great attitude to work with this would always lead to working in a safe, fun environment.

The social problem that my project identifies is lack of father engagement in a child's early development. Through my research I was able to find the consequences that were very powerful and they all connected on how children suffer academically. "At the end of the day, the most overwhelming key to a child's success is the positive involvement of parents" (Hull, 1935). My project purpose is to engage fathers in early childhood education and it's intended to benefit

our children. It was created in a continued effort to increase positive experiences in the lives of young children, Dad's create positive experiences for themselves and their children. And for participants focus on the role that they play as a dad is about families, children and the communities we live in.

Something I would hope that could be done to better the program is for it to continue to grow. Fathers do not get as much support as mothers do and this program will help them in their gain the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to be a very cool dad. Since this program was designed to be a support group for dads I would like for it to eventually open to the whole Monterey County community.

A very important piece of advice I would give to a future capstone student is to be patient. Keep in mind that our mentors are very important people within the agency, therefore, they have a lot on their shoulders and if they agreed to mentor us that is because they have a lot of knowledge to share with us. Sometimes it will be very hard to get a hold of them but do not get discouraged and take advantage of the time you have with them to ask questions, to get the information you need for your research and do not be shy. Also, take initiative, they like it and take you more serious when instead of waiting to go home you take your time to do the work correctly. Lastly network, It is very important to network in your agency that way in your last semester the staff already know who you are and if you need anything they will be willing to support.

Overall, working with Monterey County Head Start and Early Head Start Family & Community Engagement and Disabilities Services gave me all the necessary experience I needed

to grow as a person and as a professional. I am extremely thankful to have had worked at this agency that cares so much about the families and children and is always going above and beyond to help families live the American Dream.

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APPENDIX A

“Padres Bien Padres, Very Cool Dad’s” Evaluation/ Evaluacion

Was the information clear about the program?
Fué Clara la información sobre el programa?

Do you have any suggestions to improve Padres Bien Padres, Very Cool Dad’s?
Tiene usted alguna sugerencia para mejorar el programa Padres Bien Padres, Very Cool Dad’s?

What activities do you suggest to engage more male role models?
Cuáles actividades sugiere usted para involucrar mas a los padres varones?

Comments / Comentarios:

